

Nicotine Withdrawal Therapies

CAN NICOTINE CHEWING GUM HELP?

Nicotine chewing gum releases small amounts of nicotine into the body. This cuts down on withdrawal symptoms and makes it easier to break the smoking addiction. Nicotine gum is available over-the-counter and the recommended treatment period is 12 weeks.

CAN THE NICOTINE PATCH HELP?

The nicotine patch helps relieve nicotine withdrawal symptoms by providing a steady dosage of nicotine throughout the day. It reduces the craving or urges to smoke because it replaces the nicotine the smoker was used to getting from cigarettes. Each day, a new patch is applied to the upper body. One patch is removed at night, lowering the level of nicotine in the bloodstream to give the body a rest; other brands are worn at night as well. These nicotine patches are now available over-the-counter and work best when used along with a behavioral change program such as those being offered throughout Harford County.

ARE THESE NICOTINE REPLACEMENT PRODUCTS JUST AS BAD AS SMOKING CIGARETTES?

No, they do not have all the tars and poisonous gases that are found in cigarettes. Furthermore, they provide less nicotine than a smoker gets from cigarettes. These products should not be used by pregnant or nursing women. People with other medical conditions should check with their doctor before using any nicotine replacement product.

Most important is that smokers quit completely before starting to use these products. They should not smoke any cigarettes while using the patch.

ARE THERE OTHER NICOTINE REPLACEMENT PRODUCTS?

Yes. There is an inhaler and a nasal spray that are available by prescription. A doctor should be contacted to discuss the use of these products and whether they are right for you. There is also a non-nicotine pill, bupropion hydrochloride or Zyban®, that was approved in 1997 to help smokers quit. The drug, only available by prescription, is also sold as an antidepressant under the name Wellbutrin®.

